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UNCLAS TEGUCIGALPA 001710

SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/PDA (JGREENBLATT); WHA/CEN

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON DRUG TRAFFICKING, JULY 18, 2003

1. Editorial in Tegucigalpa-based moderate daily "El Herald" on 7/18 entitled "Tough fight against narco trafficking". "Undoubtedly, drug trafficking in Honduras is considerable, as shown by the recent drug seizures that have evidenced the determination of police authorities against this criminal activity that is destroying the lives of millions of young people around the world."

"The seizure of more than 2 tons of drugs in the Bay Islands this week was a hard hit against drug trafficking, and according to the Minister of Security Oscar Alvarez, it demonstrates the determination of the Honduran authorities to continue in the fight against narco trafficking."

"For that reason, we encourage the police, prosecutors and judges to keep their upfront fight against narco traffickers, and don't give in to their power and financial resources."

2. Article in Tegucigalpa-based liberal daily "La Tribuna" on 7/18 entitled "80 prominent people are being investigated for drug trafficking". "Roy Medina, the Honduran General Attorney affirmed that more than 100 tons of drugs come through Honduras destined to the US, according to the information provided by US anti-drug agencies to the US Embassy in Honduras."

"Medina stated that it's evident that a large amount of drugs go through Honduras even though it's impossible to determine exactly how much, but he acknowledged that US Ambassador Larry Palmer is well informed about this issue."

"Medina said, 'we are determined to stop drug trafficking and that's why we have strengthened our investigation work. Among those being investigated, there are 80 renowned narcos that will be brought to justice when our investigation is through'."

"About the seizure of 2,000 kilos of cocaine in Roatan after a serious warning from the US Embassy, Medina noted, 'I believe it's just a coincidence, it isn't a direct response for what the US Ambassador has recently said'."

Palmer